

# media release

*Colorado Department of Agriculture*

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### ***UDPATE: Two Cows on Two Additional Colorado Premises Test Positive for Anthrax***

LAKEWOOD, Colo. – There has been two new confirmed cases of anthrax on two additional premises in Logan County. The new cases are located adjacent to the original case announced on August 8, 2012. No other livestock on the newly affected properties are showing clinical signs of the disease. Adjacent ranchers have been notified.

“This is not an uncommon occurrence with anthrax because adjacent properties may also contain the anthrax spores in the soil; we certainly hoped there wouldn’t be other herds affected but this is the nature of the disease,” said State Veterinarian, Dr. Keith Roehr. “We will expand our efforts onto the adjacent premises to protect the health of these cattle. At this time, all of the neighboring herds have been vaccinated for anthrax and affected herds are being treated.”

Anthrax vaccination is an important tool in preventing disease although full protective immunity is not achieved until 7-10 days after a second booster dose is administered.

While the Colorado Department of Agriculture (CDA) continues to monitor and remediate the situation with the livestock owners, the Northeast Colorado Health Department (CDHD) is performing its own public health investigation, ensuring that anyone at risk for a possible exposure to anthrax receives treatment.

NCHD has also been working with the Solid Waste Program at the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment and CDA to ensure proper disposal of the animal carcasses. All of the initially infected carcasses have been incinerated; incineration kills anthrax spores and is the best means of disposal of the carcasses.

"At this point we really don't anticipate any health threat for the residents in northeast Colorado in regards to anthrax or from the smoke or plume from the incineration of the carcasses," said Dr. Cappello, the district public health administrator for the Northeast Colorado Health Department. "Anthrax is not spread person to person and anyone that has not had direct contact with infected cattle is not at risk of illness. We will continue to monitor the situation and follow up with those individuals that have been exposed through contact, but at this point there has been no human illness associated with this outbreak in cattle."

For information related to the human health risks of anthrax, contact NCHD at (970) 522-3741.

For information related to livestock information, contact CDA at (303) 239-4161.

#### **AUGUST 8, 2012 NEWS RELEASE:**

The Colorado Department of Agriculture is currently investigating an anthrax case in Logan County; one deceased cow is confirmed to have been infected with the disease, approximately 50 dead cattle are suspected to have been exposed. One location has tested positive and adjacent ranchers are being notified. No cattle left the location prior to the quarantine. No cattle entered the food chain.

The premises has been quarantined and people, cattle, and equipment that may have come into contact with anthrax are being monitored during this investigation.

"Our focus is on the potential for human exposure," said Dr. Tony Cappello, district public health administrator for the Northeast Colorado Health Department. "We are currently conducting our own public health investigation and contacting individuals that have been involved with the livestock. Anthrax is not spread from person to person and exposure is limited only to those who had contact with the affected cattle or the immediate area."

Anthrax can develop naturally in soil; the spores can become active in association with periods of marked climatic or ecologic change such as heavy rainfall, flooding or drought which can then expose the anthrax spores to grazing livestock. Outbreaks of anthrax are commonly associated with neutral or alkaline soils. In these areas the spores apparently revert to the vegetative form and multiply to infectious levels so that cattle, horses, mules, sheep and goats may readily become infected when grazing such areas.

Anthrax is a serious disease because it can cause the rapid loss of a large number of animals in a very short time. Often, animals are found dead with no illness detected. Appropriate carcass disposal is being used to prevent further soil contamination.

Producers should consult their veterinarians and vaccinate their livestock, if deemed appropriate.

Humans or animals can become infected by coming in contact with infected animals, soil or water. Anthrax infection can be treated with antibiotics, especially if caught in the early stages.

### **Frequently Asked Questions:**

#### **What is Anthrax?**

Anthrax is a serious disease caused by *Bacillus anthracis*, a bacterium that forms spores. There are three forms of anthrax: cutaneous, inhalation, and gastrointestinal.

#### **Is it contagious? Who is susceptible?**

Yes, it is contagious to all mammals, including humans. Animals most susceptible include cattle, sheep, horses and goats. Humans or animals can become infected by coming in contact with infected animals, soil or water. If humans become affected 90-95% of the infections are the cutaneous form.

### **How is it transmitted?**

Anthrax is transmitted through direct contact with the bacteria or by ingesting or breathing in the spores.

### **How is it treated?**

Anthrax can be treated with antibiotics, especially if caught in the early stages. There is a vaccine for humans and livestock. People on the quarantined location and adjacent ranches have been contacted.

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